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ABSTRACT

Issues that were raised during the student unrest years of the 1960s and 1970s and that still are pertinent to the social order of American colleges and universities are considered. It is suggested that higher education has no legal purpose to alter society and does not have the power or means to reshape it or even to resolve any basic social, economic, or political problems. Although it may propose solutions to problems and educate those in power, higher education has no direct role in the process. Hopefully, colleges will graduate persons who will find solutions to serious problems, and will train and nurture scholars. The university takes on a traditional role as a vocationally oriented, subject-structured institution whose programs and activities are prescribed and proscribed by their sponsors. The following issues are also addressed: what to do with individuals who pose as students but are interested in violent acts to close down a university, whether college should grant credit for life experiences, the special problem of minority college students, the responsibilities of the college faculty member, academic freedom, accountability of the faculty member, and the roles of the college administration. (SW)

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Unresolved Issues in Higher Education:
Legacy of the 60s and 70s

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Facing the challenges of the last two decades of the Twentieth Century, American higher education faces a new struggle for survival. Public as well as private colleges are concerned with inadequate finances, present and continuing reductions in the pool of potential students, and "overproduction" of graduate programs. Thus, it may seem to be an inappropriate time to review the hectic era of the 60s and 70s and to suggest that the unresolved issues of and about student unrest still need to be met.

The future, however, is no more certain in the 1980s than it was in the 60s and 70s when neither the ferocity and ultimate climax of the phenomenon of student unrest nor its subsequent demise was predictable nor predicted. It is one thing to breathe easier when activism (or terrorism) has moved from the campus to the field of international politics and another to rest on the hope or wish or expectation that because "history does not repeat itself" the basic issues exposed in the 60s and 70s are no longer relevant. The obvious reality is that instant communication and

the rate of change in the technological world have created an environment in which the apathetic of today may become the activists of tomorrow. New social issues may create conditions in which student frustrations may be directed against the near and enticing target, higher education. The time to restructure higher education to meet eventualities is not in the midst of the turmoil. In the 60s and 70s colleges and universities were sitting ducks for a determined radical minority. Little has transpired in the intervening decade to suggest that they would not be as vulnerable to a rise of activism triggered by the world outside the campus gates.

Student activism and unrest was not dissipated through the efforts of institutions but through political decisions and social and economic realities and, perhaps, because of the gradual exhaustion of groups and individuals after years of emotional and physical stress. Student activism wound down as the Viet Nam War wound down and as Spiro Agnew and then Richard Nixon left center stage. Perhaps, it was religious fervor that took over emotions and energy and economic realities that replaced politics. However students came to be relieved from chanting and marching and sitting-in, colleges and universities were spared the agony and the ecstasy of meeting the issues of an affirmation or reaffirmation of the role of higher education in American society. The rights, privileges, and responsibilities of students, faculties and administrations were not addressed; the pressure was off.

Stability in higher education is now dependent on the

college age population and the year-to-year willingness of young adults to accommodate to political, economic, and social structures and practices established by power-holding and power-wielding older generations. And that condition is not good enough. Because much has been left undone, there is much to be done to bring higher education into the real world of today and to prepare for the future.

Acceptance of the sitting duck posture by higher education is a surrealistic impossibility. No individual, no group, no institution can long remain defenseless to persistent attack without emotional, psychological, mental, and physical collapse. Even in practical terms, the possibility that the events of an early May shall be revisited on American campuses is intolerable. The public will not and should not accept the possibility that hundreds of millions or even billions of dollars of investment in public property shall lie idle because of the efforts of a few who may take advantage of opposition to a next great generational issue. Closing the twenty-five largest universities in the country would bar a million young people from their studies and turn them out into the streets.

Beyond the need to meet threats to individual or group safety, a serious problem is to determine or affirm the role in the American social order of its colleges and universities. Some very pertinent questions should be asked again; they include:

1. What is a university?
2. What is a student?

3. What are the duties of a faculty member?

4. What are the duties of the administration?

An obvious answer to the nature of the university is that it must be a place where a high order of learning and teaching takes place; it ought to be a center for basic research and scholarly activities. While most of the academic community may accept in general such a definition, the bounds of "scholarly" activities and the means and purposes for which they may take place are perceived in very different ways.

A university is established by the general public or a special public to serve that constituency. A public university performs services for the broad social order and a private institution is a servant of its special group. Obviously, a university is not established to destroy or even to reform its sponsor; higher education has no "legal purpose" to rend or mend society. Further, a university does not have the power or the means to reshape society or even to resolve any basic social, economic, or political problems. The university, either through its teaching or its research, is not a solver of problems. It may and should propose solutions to problems and educate those who may seek to apply those or to develop other solutions, but it never solves problems in any direct sense.

The American university cannot solve racial problems (nor can its counterpart pre-college schools). It cannot direct foreign policy, start or end wars, abolish slums or ghettos, or even stop the polluting of its own campus grounds or air. It

may and should, and hopefully will, provide among its graduates those who shall find final solutions to these and future serious problems. The university should train, cultivate, nourish, direct, and utilize scholars in society; it should facilitate their efforts and record and reward their deeds.

The members of a university community have the same right to pursue their own political objectives as any other citizens, but the institution can only (and by its actions does) take positions on broad philosophical grounds, not on the partisan political level. If the university should take a specific stand on an issue, it has then proposed final solutions and has rejected the need for further study or research. Solutions to problems may be proposed by teaching or research staff, either individually or in groups, but not by the total institution; and the solutions must always be offered tentatively and subject to further study. An institution, whose members embrace with unanimity solutions to problems, is devoid of the spirit and the reality of the give and take of ideas, of the rough edge of scholarship. In fact, no institution, not even a university, can think so that absolute positions on specific issue assumed are really misuse of institutional authority and exploitation of its prestige for the special interests of certain individuals.

There are few American universities that, like European counterparts, can claim to have been spawned by the sole efforts of a community of scholars and thus have a right to be aloof from society. In recognition of the facts of the modern world, even

non-American universities find increasing difficulty in preserving their tradition of immunity from civil constraint.

To the extent that it insists on structuring terminal four-year undergraduate programs with strong vocational emphases and sets even more rigid professional or vocational purposes for graduate programs, a university finds a necessity to regulate the learning of students, to press them into an academic production line, and to constrict rather than expand the limits of learning. Professors teach courses rather than subjects or disciplines or students. Universities are most qualified in offering learnings in the academic realm, in those areas that can be intellectualized. While abstract and theoretical teachings may be uncomfortably placed in the company of vocationalized subjects and physical activity courses, it is the academic areas that tend to be the more influenced than influence; and they have become vocationally tainted. Even philosophers feel the necessity to persuade students to become future professors of philosophy. A most damaging vocationalism in the theory of learning suggests that effective learning of history requires that one pose as an historian, of chemistry that one think like a chemist, of mathematics that one ape the mathematical curiosity, etc. While vocationalism at the university takes on the trapping of academia, the academic areas have in essence surrendered their distinctiveness as forms of pure scholarship.

In a practical sense, there is no place at most universities for a student to become an independent scholar.

And, in the nature of the university as an instrument of society, there are few suitable places in higher education for experimentation with learnings that are not socially acceptable. The American public university can hardly be comfortable in conducting explorations in the use of drugs or the formation of unusual social groupings or even the temporary abandonment of the general order of social norms and values. If these learnings are to take place, few universities have been authorized by their sponsors or patrons as appropriate locales.

Thus, the university takes on a traditional role as a vocationally-oriented, subject-structured institution whose programs and activities are prescribed and proscribed by their sponsors. This may, understandably, be far too limited a purpose for those who would release the learner to his own learnings and meld the distinctions between the society and the university. But these individuals are not without their alternatives. Being unable to change the university to their image, they should be able to set up experimental communes of "free universities" where they will. Perhaps it is difficult to accept the fact that such freedom may be at the sacrifice of salaries, warm and comfortable offices and classrooms, dormitories, college cafeterias, and convenient access to student unions, college bookstores, and masses of students. But desire is not necessarily imperative or immediate if it demands all the comforts as well. Many social experimenters are their own worst enemies when they yield to the temptation to abandon the necessary isolation to

publicize publicly promote their social experimentation.

A student is, obviously, someone who pursues a course of study. But this simple definition is not easy to apply at a large university on a quarter system of instruction. Every ten weeks hundreds of students are entering, graduating, dropping out permanently or temporarily, or transferring in or out of divisions within the institution. Some familiar faces are dropouts; an unfamiliar face may be struggling with one or two courses while working at a full-time job.

When bombers, arsonists, or opportunistic revolutionaries are included in the general category of "student," a use of minimal intelligence suggests that unusual and unhappy precautions are required. When institutions become targets or when threats are made to "shut it down", even the most idealistic scholar must come to grant that a willing face in the classroom may be a dangerous psychopath whose interest in a subject does not stand in the way of firebombing his professor's office or braining him with a club. Regrettably, a crisis requires unusual measures that some will challenge as repressive. But, be that as it may, the university that wishes to preserve an atmosphere in which teaching, study, and research may proceed must require such procedures as student identification, measures to keep malicious nonstudents off the campus, closer regulation of transfers into the institution and of those who drop all or most of their courses as soon as instruction commences, supervision of all persons on university property including dormitories, and strict

control over the conduct of student protest. It may be advisable to enter into formal contracts with students outlining the duties and legitimate actions of student and university and providing enforcement of the contract as a condition for inclusion into the university community. The nonstudent should not be permitted to pose as a student when he uses the role to accommodate an attack on the institution.

Some faculty members oppose control over "student" presence and actions on the grounds that it is a violation of the concept of a "free and open university." An obvious and unfortunately true commentary is that a posture exposing the university to those who shall destroy it may make the whole issue irrelevant if the end result is the closing down of the campus. A "free" university is still subject to questions concerning free to whom and for what purpose. The answers must be freedom for legitimate faculty and students and for the purposes of teaching, learning, and research. An "open" university is open to pursue these same ends; it is not open to destroyers of buildings or to those who would deny the rights of students to pursue their studies or professors to profess. The hope is that even the idealistic professor may come to distinguish between a student and a bomber while there is still a campus and the professor still has a job.

Turning from that small but not to be forgotten minority of revolutionists, the movement into mass higher education has created problems for some students who are able to cross most of the logical barriers between cultures or social classes and find

some of the traditional college requirements, such as foreign language instruction, unreasonable. Frequently the arguments they pose are quite compelling in the present society and there seem to be few legitimate reasons, other than conflicts of opinion or the protection of special academic interests, that some relaxation of requirements or opportunities for more alternative programs should not be provided. Certainly, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the vast changes in the American universities in the character of their students, faculty, and administration should also be reflected by changes in academic programs. Change, however, should be in addition to or substitution of true learnings and legitimate scholarship for replaced programs. To grant college credit for life experiences, for example, is total rejection of the notion that the uniqueness of a university rests in its claim as a conservator and distributor of knowledge. Formal education never has claimed to be the sole instrument of learning and to have exclusive control of education of the emerging and mature adult; it should neither take credit for all "life experiences" or grant credit for them. The university was intended and is expected to provide additional learning experiences for all students. Most institutions provide means for waiving courses or requirements that the student has already mastered.

The minority students pose a special problem for some colleges and universities. Black students are often actively recruited from the ghetto, subsidized by the university, and then ignored. Unlike the recruited athlete whose role is to participate

in athletic competition, the recruited black student cannot be expected to substitute blackness as the major reason for attending the university. Nonscholarly, nonvocational black studies programs may not suit those students who have difficulty in adjusting to the white middle class values of the university and it is scarcely a worthwhile alternative as a measure of the basic role of the university if some students resort to learning the techniques of minority confrontation as substitutive activities. There may be a basic difference between revolutionary and black confrontation, when the philosophical base of the latter may be either social integration or social separation but is not societal destruction. But the university can scarcely accept the one and not the other if disruptions become both a means and end. And frequently minority disruptions become a screen for revolutionists.

A faculty member is, first of all, employed at a university and, hopefully, committed to the integrity of his institution and the general purposes of higher education. His major responsibility is to scholarly pursuits: teaching and/or research. Obviously, he meets his classes; of course, he prepares learning experiences; and certainly, he maintains his competence in his specialization and engages in such mundane matters as examinations and determining grades. The professor's interest in students arises from a basic humanitarianism implicit in the task of teaching, and, in particular, a concern for the effectiveness of his own instruction; he becomes available to his students.

Despite the sloganizing of a determined religious-political minority, it is as a scholarly, not material, humanist that a professor must function.

Outside his classroom and office, the instructor's major interest in university affairs centers on matters of the academic program. The pulling and hauling among academic interests with reference to which subjects should be offered or required, how resources should be apportioned among undergraduate and graduate programs, how much research there should be and of what kind, and which faculty members should be recognized for promotion and tenure should extract from concerned faculty whatever time and energy is still left after responding to demands for a constant improvement of instruction. It is an abominable waste of faculty strength to involve professors in the routine matters of running a university. The temptation to feed a scholar's ego by involving him in many and varied committee assignments ought to be balanced by the realization that too much time and energy spent on too many committees does detract from instructional and scholarly activities. There may be no situation more ludicrous than when a group of highly skilled adults meet several times a week under the agendas of several differing committees to mull over several sets of problems from who should park cars where, when, and under what circumstances to whether the committee for a Free Transylvania should receive institutional recognition and/or support. It is unfortunate that the prestige, many perquisites, and high salary of administration are a powerful magnet to many

professors. Perhaps, what is needed is an equalizing readjustment in financial rewards for administrators to the realistic facilitator of instruction rather than as the genius that creates it.

While it is admittedly difficult, a professor is forced to distinguish between his beliefs about social, economic, and political problems or moral values or religious beliefs and the content of his instruction. Failure to do so contaminates the teaching process with indoctrination. Support of partisan or special interests in a pluralistic and democratic society directly contradicts the commitment of a search for unfettered truth. A special task for the professor is to resolve the problem of defining "academic freedom" satisfactorily before others (particularly legislators) define it unsatisfactorily. The eventual definition must restrict faculty from academic malfeasance or misfeasance and obviously unethical use of a privileged position.

The most bitter pill to be swallowed, however, has to do with accountability of the entire academic community, including the professor. There is no valid reason why, in the European tradition, the classroom should not be open to anyone who may wish to sit in, providing space is first available to those registered for credit in the course. The open classroom door would mean a real test of academic freedom for it would require from the administration complete support of the professor under attack against academic freedom by various political, social, or economic special interests. This sort of an atmosphere would provide a test of the "free and open" university in the truest sense.

In addition to the general public or students shopping for future professors, the classroom should be open to colleagues, departmental chairmen, or administrators who may be visiting informally or in the process of gathering data about the effectiveness and efficiency of the classroom. The professor must be accountable for what transpires in the classroom as well as how he performs in "scholarly" tasks of professional association activities, research, or publication. A professor should be hired for teaching or supportive strengths, be held accountable for his specialty, and, finally, be judged on his performance as a specialist. To do so requires access to his actual performance and, in the process, the open classroom or laboratory. Placing the responsibility for judging professorial competence on the immature, or by definition less mature, student is to undermine the professoriate. It encourages the diminution of the struggle and pain that rests in the search for intellectual truth if popularity is the substitute for profundity.

While professors are confused about whether they should teach or conduct research, or publish, or administer the university, the administration is caught between desires to validate the past, build the future, or listen to gripes of faculty, complaints of students, inquiries of parents, growls from the public, threats from legislators, or righteous outcries from alumni. Despite contrary temptations, the major role of the administration ought to be facilitation of the instructional

process. Students, parents, alumni, publics, legislators aside, the administration has a major responsibility to promote and protect teaching and learning. The classroom is more important than the dormitory, professors' offices more important than the president's, faculty voices of more significance than alumni, the library of higher priority than the stadium or student union.

Placed in an authoritative position over the faculty, the administration ought to exercise leadership, or at least provide opportunities for leadership to become identified, be supported, and exert a full and proper influence. In a situation where judgments are by nature highly subjective, educational administrations tend to be highly rigid or largely unstructured in exercising authority or accounting for areas of responsibility. Faculties seem to be either largely excluded from decision-making roles and apparatus or overly-involved in them. In the first instance the professor is likely to resent decisions made in secrecy affecting his present and future. In the second the process may become bogged down with such separation of responsibility and authority that accountability is obscured and even the most minor problems become weapons in the struggle for power and prestige. In this situation inordinate time and effort evolves little or no progress. Unfortunately, the trend seems to be a wobbling between almost total dispersion of authority and a tough, authoritarian management model of boards of trustees or admissions. Some university senates have been organized to include students and even townspeople, at the same time being given

control over more institutional issues and programs. In other institutions the pendulum has swung from over-involvement of faculties to abolish meaningful participation by faculties or students. Many administrators establish and reestablish delegation of authority over university matters in response to a current pressure on the administration by publics, faculty, or students rather than on the basis of any theoretical or philosophical position. Long-range goals and interests are sacrificed for temporary comfort.

A favorite resort to the solution of problems by administrators is a continuous expanding and shuffling of structure. But in the continual reestablishing of lines of authority and delegation of duties changes are seldom made toward the resolution of basic instructional problems. Even without the restructuring, processes for change are generally too complex, unwieldy, and involve the approval of too many disinterested parties. In the simple matter of the experts in an academic department updating the curriculum by substituting one course for another, the proposed change must often be approved first by committees of its own college and then subjected to inept experts in all-university committees for final approval. And when a change is finally made, there may be no accounting of what then transpires within the classroom to ascertain whether the new program is really followed. A solution rests in the administration placing responsibility for instruction with the faculty and then holding colleges and departments and instructors factually and observably accountable for the content

and quality of the process in the classroom.

By keeping the administration free of an inordinate concern for the mechanics of teaching but retaining control by exercising responsibility for quality through the hiring, retention, promotion, granting of tenure and salary increases, a more efficient instructional process may evolve. In large part, this means shifting the burden of proof of faculty competence from the posture that it is a professor's right to tenure and promotion unless it is proved otherwise to a procedure through which a faculty member demonstrates through the open classroom and by evidence of scholarly activities that his retention and promotion is warranted. In connection with the matter of tenure, the long-neglected machinery through which peers remove a tenured colleague when incompetence follows the granting of tenure should be built into the university system of due process. Tenure is essential to guarantee the accountability of the administration; and so are the procedures for termination of tenure.

Similarly, administrators should accept the responsibility for the facilitation of instruction by improving means for hiring new faculty (and in part by providing funds necessary for a searching recruitment) and by exercising an expert and informed judgment about allocation of physical plant and instructional resources without always having to involve the advice of innumerable faculty committees. A common example of administrative ineffectiveness is the tendency to establish instructional resources, such as educational television systems, without providing the staff or

finances to make them effective in the classroom. Similarly, there is something unreal about long-fought battles over use of surplus buildings that are finally resolved by filling the space with administrative offices. It is hardly amusing to note the ease with which administrative offices, like mercury, can fill empty space. Too frequently failures of administration to administer are rooted in the involvement of faculty in matters that should be resolved on the administrative level. Responsibility for these judgments should be focused on individuals and not diffused onto "the committee" that is often unable to resolve its own struggles for power and never really makes the determination.

University administrations ought to assume total responsibility and authority over nonacademic affairs. Typically, it is these nonacademic matters that consume too much of a faculty's time and energy and prevent a proper concern for the facilitation of instruction. There are means through which many of these matters could be resolved with at least more satisfaction than is now realized. Universities ought to get out of the housing and food businesses, a common source of friction with students. Dormitories could well be run by private management agencies or student cooperatives with the generally unsatisfactory dormitory supervision placed in the responsibility of management and through them in the hands of civil authorities for such matters as health standards and control of conduct. Recreational activities, including athletic programs, ought to be conducted by student cooperatives chartered under state law and subject to state

supervision. Peripheral activities, such as bookstores and placement offices, are more appropriately private enterprises or student cooperatives, or both in a healthy competition. Only when universities reduce management responsibilities to a minimum and place them in the hands of others can administrations focus on the real business of the university.

Faculties are in a particularly disadvantaged position as far as relations between the university and legislatures or boards of trustees, alumni, or the local community are concerned. Here the administration must act for the institution. Of these relationships, the most seriously affected in the wake of disturbances or violence on campus is that of town and gown. A persistent problem for most institutions is the nature of relations with the local community. The university should not be judged by the most offensive of its students nor the community by its most exploiting merchants or landlords. It rests with the university administration to mediate with an equally sincere and well-intentioned local government. There are obvious cooperative opportunities with local police and campus security and with public and university housing regulatory groups to share concerns for the health and safety of off-campus housing. It is scarcely satisfactory to attempt to resolve problems in either of two extreme measures: a cooperative relationship where university expertise and services become highly interrelated with the community and with its governance and its problems, or an exaggerated isolation of the university from the community.

The human academic community (not the institutional university) may provide commercial and recreational services for students through student-faculty-staff cooperatives. Included in the commercial services would be credit unions, banking services, general merchandising, and personal services from self-service laundries to barber and beauty shops.

Perhaps, the key to moving the university from sitting duck to self-supportive institution is in the reform and revitalizing of the administration. Unless the center of responsibility and authority can be made to function, there is doubt that any subordinate segment may do so. Eventually, however, the entire fabric of the university may need to be rebuilt if the experiment in mass higher education is to work.

The challenge may seem to many to be overwhelming, but the alternatives are intolerable. This country can ill-afford another decade of turmoil on the nation's campuses that may readily spill over into a war between the generations with the unacceptable likelihood of bloodletting and death among ivied walls.